

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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In the Matter of:

TAKI TOOO  
DCA-03-MM-035

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Sunday,  
June 15, 2003

INTERVIEW OF:

ROBERT BALES

PRESENT:

BILL WOODY  
K. LAWERNSON  
P. WOOD  
LT. GILMORE

1 P R O C E E D I N G S  
2 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
3 MR. BALES: Well, we started off at six  
4 o'clock. We loaded up. And I give the customers the  
5 spiel about the boat and everything and all the  
6 safety equipment. Then we headed out knowing that  
7 the bar was a little bit bumpy. We had to go out  
8 and wait for it, to calm down. You can't see it  
9 from in there. So you just go out there and pick a  
10 way through it.  
11 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
12 MR. BALES: The Norwester, the Oakland Pilot  
13 and myself and the Taki Too were all sitting out  
14 there watching it. And the Norwester --  
15 MR. WOODY: In what order?  
16 MR. BALES: Like that, Norwester, Oakland  
17 Pilot, myself and the Taki Too. But, we mill  
18 around, you know, and the Norwester went first. He  
19 headed out first and then the Oakland Pilot and then  
20 I picked my spot and I went. And then here come  
21 Doug, I guess. I never seen, I never seen Doug. He  
22 was there in the bar, but once I start out, I don't  
23 watch behind me, because what I want to see is ahead  
24 of me anyway. So, I don't care what is behind me.  
25 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
26 MR. BALES: And I got across the bar, of  
27 course, I looked up and the first thing I heard, I  
28 thought I heard this on the radio and I told the  
29 insurance company, I heard the Coast Guard come on  
30 or somebody come on and say that the D&D has been  
31 over. Well, I knew it happened because I was in it,  
32 you know, and so I said, well, we are not over. So,  
33 I moved on out a little further because I thought  
34 maybe they couldn't see me down, you know, maybe the  
35 swell was too high. So I moved on out, so they could  
36 see me. And then I listened and that happened, so I  
37 headed on up to go fishing. I got about, oh,  
38 probably a half, maybe not even a half mile up the  
39 road, up in the water there, and then it come over  
40 on 16 that there was a boat that had tipped over, I  
41 think they said with 19 passengers. So, I knew how  
42 many passengers where on Doug's boat, so, it had  
43 tipped over.  
44 So, I turned around and went back and  
45 called the Coast Guard and asked them if there was  
46 anything I could do, you know, if I could help them  
47 in any way. And they said, well, I could go out and  
48 get people, and I said, well, I am not in, I have  
49 got 19 people onboard, so I am not going to go in,  
50 on the surf line and I wasn't thinking at that time,  
51 that the tide was moving in by then, so all I was  
52 doing is spinning wheels out there. I mean, it had  
53 been a miracle for somebody to get out to me. There  
54 is no way that they could have got out to me because  
55 I was probably half mile off, half a mile, three

1 quarters of mile off to sea. There is no way they  
2 could have gotten to me.

3 So, we sit around out there. I waited  
4 around out for about an hour and a half. And my  
5 people started getting sick, so, I, Shawn, was  
6 first, he said, he called me on the radio, he said,  
7 I am going to take my on down, we are going to go  
8 out and still fish and I said, well, I am, too. I  
9 need to get these people away from this turmoil, you  
10 know. And so, we, I asked the passengers, do you  
11 want to go fishing or do you want to stay here, or  
12 do -- You can bounce around here until noon or we  
13 can go fishing. And most of them said, well, let's  
14 go fishing. A couple of them said I would just as  
15 assume go on, but, that isn't going to happen,  
16 because I am not going to take you in until the bar  
17 flattens out. I knew that when we left, that the  
18 tide change was going to be a two o'clock, 1:51, I  
19 think when the tide goes out. And any time after  
20 12, one o'clock, the bar is going to have enough  
21 water on it, no matter how it is, it is going to  
22 flatten out. So, I said that is when I said, we are  
23 going to be out until noon, at least noon.

24 So, we went on and went down fishing. At  
25 noon we were back or 12:30, the bar was flat, or  
26 fairly flat, you might have some bump on it, but it  
27 was flat enough we could turn around and come on in.  
28 And that is how my day went.

29 MR. WOODY: Okay. You said the tide changes  
30 about two o'clock?

31 MR. BALES: The tide changes about two  
32 o'clock.

33 MR. WOODY: Two o'clock. You came back in  
34 about what time?

35 MR. BALES: About one o'clock.

36 MR. WOODY: One o'clock.

37 MR. BALES: One, 1:30.

38 MR. WOODY: (inaudible)

39 MR. BALES: Yeah, just about. It is, there  
40 is plenty of water on the bar at that time, well,  
41 you, guys, know it. The full water is your best  
42 tide, when you have got full water that is the best  
43 tide. That is it.

44 MR. WOODY: Okay.

45 MR. BALES: Any questions and I will answer  
46 them.

47 MR. WOODY: Okay. You went out and you  
48 milled around, how many times did you turn around,  
49 how did you look, what thoughts did you have trying  
50 to find -- at what point I can go.

51 MR. BALES: Well, we had, I could look at my  
52 TPS and show you, my track out there. It covered  
53 about, oh, let's see I had it on a half mile scale,  
54 so I covered probably about a half mile, I was  
55 covering around, just circling, looking. I told the

1 passengers -- It is best if they are watching  
2 anyway, instead of looking at the water and getting  
3 sick, but, they are looking around.  
4 MR. WOODY: When you were in the channel, in  
5 the jetty, trying to fix your timing to get out.  
6 MR. BALES: Right.  
7 MR. WOODY: How many times --  
8 MR. BALES: Oh, in there? How many times I  
9 mill around in there? Oh, I don't know, I was there  
10 for, oh, 45 minutes I suppose.  
11 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
12 MR. BALES: I don't have, I don't have to  
13 circle, you pull up and you put it in reverse and  
14 sit there and watch it. It is best if I can keep my  
15 eye on it, it is best to look at this way, then  
16 circle around and have to keep cranking your head, I  
17 might have missed something, so I always try to back  
18 up so I can watch it, and then I can see everything  
19 that is happening ahead of me.  
20 MR. WOODY: What position were you when you  
21 backed in, up and going forward?  
22 MR. BALES: What --  
23 MR. WOODY: -- the jetties or --  
24 MR. BALES: Oh, no, how far out on the  
25 jetties?  
26 MR. WOODY: Yes.  
27 MR. BALES: Oh, no, I would back in -- I was  
28 about halfway between the tower and the jetties.  
29 There used to be a gate up there and I think it is  
30 gone now, and it is about right across from where  
31 the gate used to be. And that is where I sat. And  
32 that is what we, the boat, the boat was turned too  
33 much and I couldn't get it to come around and then I  
34 kicked it in gear and go back up and mill around  
35 again or if I started to get too far out where I  
36 wasn't comfortable, I would turn it around and go  
37 back up and then start all over again. I mean, it  
38 isn't good to sit there because -- boat don't back  
39 up very well, anyway.  
40 MR. WOODY: Yes.  
41 MR. BALES: So, that is what we did.  
42 MR. WOODY: Okay. Now, when you pick your  
43 time to go out, does it matter -- are you waiting  
44 for it to flatten out or just waiting for just the  
45 occurrence of a good break or good --  
46 MR. BALES: Well, obviously when you get  
47 closer to slack type, the bar gets flatter, whether  
48 it is low tide or high tide, it gets flatter. So,  
49 the longer we sit there, the flatten the bar is  
50 going to get, you know. So, I was just watching and  
51 of course the longer you are sitting there,  
52 everything is changing and it flattens out enough  
53 that you can go.  
54 MR. WOODY: You can make go.  
55 Once you got out to sea with your people,

1 did you, was it, did you have a comfortable ride out  
2 there?

3 MR. BALES: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. It was  
4 beautiful. It, I think the forecast called for 11  
5 foot swells, but, I really don't think it got that  
6 tall. Now, coming back, when we come back, after  
7 fishing, it was probably running about 11 foot then,  
8 but when we were sitting out there, I didn't think  
9 it was that tall. It might have been, but it didn't  
10 feel that tall. They were really spread out, really  
11 quite a distance between them.

12 MR. WOODY: Okay. How far out were you, how  
13 far up the coast were you when you were fishing?

14 MR. BALES: It was about, about three miles.  
15 MR. WOODY: Three miles. And were you  
16 south --

17 MR. BALES: And then we went south. We  
18 were, initially we were going to go north, I always  
19 head up north, until this happened, and we sat  
20 around out there and the time gets by you, where I  
21 don't have time to go north, you know, and get you  
22 back in time.

23 MR. WOODY: Okay.

24 MR. BALES: So, we decided to go, we made  
25 the decision or I made the decision.

26 MR. WOODY: About how far south did you go?

27 MR. BALES: Just seven miles.

28 MR. WOODY: Seven miles, okay.

29 MR. BALES: It is seven miles down to three  
30 --

31 MR. WOODY: I am trying to find where your  
32 fishing hole is.

33 MR. BALES: You want some -- I will give it  
34 to you.

35 MR. WOODY: Yes.

36 MR. BALES: It is easier that way, rather  
37 than guessing.

38 MR. WOODY: Do you remember --

39 MR. BALES: They were running, where we,  
40 yeah, they were, I am sure they were coming pretty  
41 much right out of the west or just slightly  
42 northwest, maybe. Because it seemed like that they  
43 --

44 MR. WOODY: Now, were there any other swells  
45 that --

46 MR. BALES: Pardon me?

47 MR. WOODY: Were there any other swell  
48 systems coming in that you could detect?

49 MR. BALES: No, no.

50 MR. WOODY: All was the swells the west.

51 MR. BALES: Right.

52 MR. WOODY: Maybe a little north or west.

53 MR. BALES: Yeah, I didn't, you mean like  
54 was there really west boarding on the bar? You  
55 know, where you get this and that?

1                   MR. WOODY: I am just asking for, if you  
2 could remember --  
3                   MR. BALES: Well, on the bar out here, you  
4 have, you get that west boarded effect so to speak,  
5 where they don't know where they are going, you know  
6 what I mean? They were running, well, they were,  
7 you get some that are coming from the northwest and  
8 you get some coming from the west. So, they were  
9 coming in, oh, I suppose, maybe a little more  
10 northwest out on the bar there.  
11                  MR. WOODY: Okay.  
12                  MR. BALES: But, when you are running out,  
13 crossing, when I turned to make, to go out, I run  
14 northwest because I want to -- as well, that is  
15 usually what I do.  
16                  MR. WOODY: Now when you go out to channel  
17 course, do you come to point where you either go  
18 south or you go north?  
19                  MR. BALES: Well, when I go out, I am in the  
20 center.  
21                  MR. WOODY: In the center.  
22                  MR. BALES: Yeah, I like to be in the  
23 center, I can see both sides and see what is going  
24 on. And so I sit in the center.  
25                  MR. WOODY: Can you go straight out over the  
26 bar or do you have to --  
27                  MR. BALES: Oh, I don't think I would if I  
28 were you.  
29                  MR. WOODY: You don't do that.  
30                  MR. BALES: Oh, no, there is only, there is  
31 probably, there are places out there where I don't  
32 think you have got 30 feet of water. If I was you,  
33 if I was, oh, no, I would never go straight out. As  
34 soon as I get across the bar, I either go north or  
35 south, whichever way I want to go, get off the bar,  
36 and go out on the ocean. Yeah, I don't, I wouldn't  
37 want to be on the bar.  
38                  MR. WOODY: Okay.  
39                  MR. BALES: I get away from it as fast as I  
40 can. So, as soon as we get outside into the south  
41 jetty, about 200 yards out, maybe, well, they have  
42 got, they have got a buoy that it is sitting there,  
43 about halfway between the buoy and the south jetty,  
44 is where the jetty is washed away and if you get  
45 out, and you can see -- start whaling there, if you  
46 get, before you get the white water right there.  
47 All you have got to is go just outside of that and  
48 you can go right on out. And then the north, the  
49 north you just go out and, go 200 yards, 300 yards  
50 and you are safe to make your turn, because the  
51 jetties have --  
52                  MR. WOODY: Is there anything that could be  
53 done that would have a lasting effect on, you know,  
54 crossing the bar out there?  
55                  MR. BALES: You know, I know that everybody

1 is harping and they would like, I would like to see  
2 it dredged. But I don't think the Corps of  
3 Engineers is ever going to come up with the money to  
4 do it. I mean, it is a lot of money. And that is  
5 the only thing that could save it. And I don't know  
6 how long a lasting effect that would have. They  
7 would have to research it. I mean, you could dredge  
8 that thing tomorrow and in a month from now it could  
9 fill back it. I don't know. But, it would be nice  
10 to have it dredged out. And I know, I talked to  
11 somebody who did some research on it here two years  
12 ago, about it dredged, and they were talking about  
13 coming back up even into the channel some and  
14 dredging, and I guess the environmentalists or  
15 somebody said that they can't do that, because of  
16 the crabs and the oysters and the clams and stuff,  
17 it would kill them.

18 MR. WOODY: -- environmentalists, because  
19 they can, certainly don't want to be at war with the  
20 environmentalists --

21 MR. BALES: Oh, definitely.

22 MR. WOODY: Would it be a lasting thing? I  
23 was just wondering.

24 MR. BALES: That I couldn't tell you. I  
25 really, I am not an engineer. No way that I ever, I  
26 couldn't tell you. It has gotten worse in the past  
27 years, I mean, over the last, since I have been  
28 running boat, which is eight years, charter boat.  
29 It has gotten worse. But, I run my own boat for 15  
30 years. I started in '78, about '78 and I had a  
31 little troller that I would come out here fishing.  
32 I fished out here since '78, so, '78, '79, and I  
33 know it has gotten worse since then.

34 MR. WOODY: Since then.

35 MR. BALES: Oh, yeah. A lot worse.

36 MR. WOODY: How long have you been driving  
37 boats in this area?

38 MR. BALES: Since about '78.

39 MR. WOODY: Since '78.

40 MR. BALES: Yeah. But, I have always had, I  
41 have always had a small, my boat was always a small  
42 boat. I had 24 foot Bayliner. And that is what I  
43 run prior to getting the captain's license. And I  
44 worked on the charter boats a lot, you know, when I  
45 wasn't fishing. So, I have a, I have crossed that  
46 bar a lot of times.

47 MR. WOODY: A lot of times.

48 MR. BALES: I have got a lot of bar time. I  
49 am not, I shouldn't say I am not scared of it, but I  
50 have a lot of respect for it.

51 MR. WOODY: How long have you been operating  
52 the D&D?

53 MR. BALES: See I started, let's see, Doug  
54 sold that, see, I went, Doug has it had it four  
55 years, about five years, four or five years.

1 MR. WOODY: Four or five years.  
2 MR. BALES: Four or five, I am not, let's  
3 see I got, Mick has it three years now. And I  
4 worked for Doug, I guess about five years, I have  
5 been operating the D&D. I told you -- four years,  
6 but I think it is five years.  
7 MR. WOODY: And Mick has had for three  
8 years.  
9 MR. BALES: He has had it for three.  
10 MR. WOODY: Three.  
11 MR. BALES: I think so, yeah. Okay. And  
12 then I think Doug had it for, I think, when Pearl  
13 left, two years prior to that is when I went to work  
14 there with, I used to work Troller Charters, which  
15 is Troller.  
16 MR. WOODY: Troller.  
17 MR. BALES: The one on the end there with  
18 Steve Veinus, you know, where he has got it now.  
19 And then I ran the Mischief and the Big G out there.  
20 And when Larry and Lorraine Vancouver sold it, then  
21 I went to work for Doug and that is where I have  
22 been ever since. And of course, Doug sold it to  
23 Mick and well, now we are right here.  
24 MR. WOODY: Did you ever get any pressure  
25 from the owner of the boat or the operator to go  
26 out?  
27 MR. BALES: No. I told them and I told Doug  
28 and I told, I told them all, I said, it is my  
29 decision. If I want to go, I don't give a shit if  
30 the bar is flat and the ocean is flat, if I don't  
31 feel comfortable, I am not going. I mean, that is  
32 the way it is.  
33 MR. WOODY: Now, when you go, you are  
34 getting a certain amount of income that day.  
35 MR. BALES: So, what the hell is income?  
36 MR. WOODY: Yes.  
37 MR. BALES: So is only money, it isn't a lot  
38 of money. We don't make a lot of money at this. I  
39 enjoy fishing, and that is what I do it for. I  
40 don't do it for the money, I guarantee you. And no,  
41 they have never pressured me to take a trip. Nobody  
42 has. But, I set that law down right at the  
43 beginning before I ever went to work for them.  
44 MR. WOODY: We have -- We always ask your  
45 age.  
46 MR. BALES: Fifty eight.  
47 MR. WOODY: Fifty eight, okay.  
48 MR. BALES: I was born in 1945.  
49 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
50 MR. BALES: February 6.  
51 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
52 MR. BALES: That would be all on my license.  
53 MR. WOODY: Sure.  
54 MR. BALES: Of course that has all of that  
55 information.



1 MR. WOODY: Are you taking any prescription  
2 medications or anything like that?  
3 MR. BALES: Well, I take blood pressure  
4 medicine, that is all.  
5 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
6 MR. BALES: I take, well, I don't even know  
7 what the name of it is.  
8 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
9 MR. BALES: But, that is all I take.  
10 MR. WOODY: Your vision is good?  
11 MR. BALES: Yeah.  
12 MR. WOODY: Feel good?  
13 MR. BALES: Oh, yeah, yeah. I was out  
14 shoveling sand today, out of the boat. Did they  
15 ever get it moved?  
16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It is, I guess about  
17 halfway up the beach now.  
18 MR. BALES: So, they are working on it.  
19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They are dragging it  
20 hard, I guess.  
21 MR. BALES: Well, they will have it  
22 destroyed, but, it is a total, but, I know that,  
23 you, guys, wanted to inspect it, didn't you?  
24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.  
25 MR. BALES: Somebody wanted to take a look  
26 at it.  
27 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, there are other  
28 NTSB members that are with the boat now and will be  
29 looking at it shortly.  
30 MR. BALES: Yeah.  
31 MR. WOODY: Bobby, is there anything where  
32 the company, does the company have any kind of  
33 policy as sending the bigger boats out first and  
34 then the little boats?  
35 MR. BALES: Well, it depends on, the way  
36 they are trying to do it, is split, you know, so  
37 everybody has a trip, they are trying to run in them  
38 a sequence, whoever took the last trip, they go to  
39 the tail end of the line, which is the third boat.  
40 And, you know, they are trying that. This is the  
41 first year they have tried it. And so, you know,  
42 they don't have any policy that way. As far as, it  
43 has never been that way anyway.  
44 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
45 MR. BALES: Of course, when Doug had it, he  
46 was number one, you know, number one boat, so he, of  
47 course, he wanted to go first, when Doug had the,  
48 which is fine. Of course, I was number two, so that  
49 didn't make any difference. It was a lot of work  
50 for all of us, you know. So, that is we, that is  
51 the way things have been working.  
52 MR. WOODY: The other thing is would you  
53 fill the big boats up first and the little ones up  
54 next?  
55 MR. BALES: No, no.

1 MR. WOODY: Anything like that?  
2 MR. BALES: Well, if you had, they only  
3 carry about, even the big boat, it doesn't carry  
4 that many more than we do, you know.  
5 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
6 MR. BALES: And, so -- I could use another  
7 little shot, thank you. I lost my train of thought  
8 there.  
9 MR. WOODY: We were talking about the taking  
10 turns.  
11 MR. BALES: Oh, yeah.  
12 MR. WOODY: That sort of thing.  
13 MR. BALES: Oh, the amount of people. No,  
14 they --  
15 MR. WOODY: And I guess the question was,  
16 you fill the big boats and then you fill little  
17 boats last.  
18 MR. BALES: Yeah.  
19 MR. WOODY: And you were saying the --  
20 MR. BALES: The boats are the same size  
21 except the Norwester.  
22 MR. WOODY: I think you, the big boats don't  
23 carry all that many more.  
24 MR. BALES: No, see, he only carries, he  
25 doesn't like to carry more than about 20, or 24,  
26 maybe. Well, we, I take 20, 18 and 2. So, you  
27 know, there is not that much difference. The only  
28 thing it is more comfortable for him if he has got  
29 20, 24 people onboard on a 43 foot boat, it is much  
30 more comfortable than --  
31 MR. WOODY: Okay. So, he could carry 20  
32 people.  
33 MR. BALES: Yes.  
34 MR. WOODY: Was the other boat certified to  
35 carry the same thing?  
36 MR. BALES: No, he was certified to 22.  
37 MR. WOODY: Twenty two, okay.  
38 MR. BALES: Twenty two people. In fact he  
39 was certified, he had, the reason, I used to be  
40 also, but or the D&D used to be, but they changed it  
41 when the Coast Guard, we had to put on, we had to  
42 put in a new bulkhead, because they said the  
43 bulkhead that we had wasn't sufficient. So, we made  
44 that change.  
45 Well, first of all, let me go back, back  
46 another year. They told us we had to do it and  
47 then they said we didn't have to do it. And so,  
48 but, he said, in order to get away from it, we had  
49 to change the rafts. We had to go from a flotation  
50 device to the raft.  
51 MR. WOODY: Right.  
52 MR. BALES: So, that is what we did. And  
53 then this year we had to put in a bulkhead in. They  
54 said, no, that wasn't sufficient. We had to put a  
55 bulkhead in. And so, that is the reason --

1 (Pause.)  
2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I am sorry, I got  
3 called away, you were talking about the requirements  
4 for life saving equipment.  
5 MR. BALES: Yeah, well, two years ago they  
6 told us that we needed to change, we had to put a  
7 bulkhead in.  
8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right, in each  
9 subdivision.  
10 MR. BALES: Each subdivision. And then when  
11 we were, we were in the process of starting to do  
12 that, as a matter of fact we were being inspected,  
13 and they said, no, you don't have to do it. We can  
14 go to the flotation devices.  
15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.  
16 MR. BALES: So, we did. And then this year  
17 they said, no, you can't do that, you have to put in  
18 a bulkhead, so we put in a bulkhead. But, that is  
19 that the Taki, that is the D&D.  
20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.  
21 MR. BALES: And we are talking about the  
22 Taki here. And they didn't have to do that. There  
23 was a problem, the reason we got into this was the,  
24 for some reason the D&D must be heavier, because  
25 they didn't float in the water the same. From the  
26 water level, from the water to where they were, to  
27 the top of the rail, was different in the two boats.  
28 And that, the Taki, they loaded, we have to do all  
29 of this, load them with water, you know, so the --  
30 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.  
31 MR. BALES: Check the --  
32 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Stability.  
33 MR. BALES: Well, it wasn't the stability,  
34 they would fill, they wanted to be able to fill the  
35 engine compartment with water, and still float. I  
36 think is what the whole thing stems from.  
37 Something like that. I mean, that was what the  
38 weight was for. If they figured this much water  
39 weighs this much, put it in this compartment, it is  
40 like a subdivision.  
41 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.  
42 MR. BALES: And it -- Yeah.  
43 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
44 MR. BALES: And that was, and then they do  
45 this, and then they measure it from the water level  
46 to the side, I think, I don't remember exactly where  
47 they measure it. And, and for some reason the D&D  
48 wouldn't pass, that is how we got into having to go  
49 into the -- and all of that, but the Taki passed  
50 fine. He passed, got to put the two rafts on and  
51 still hold his 22 people. Well, we had to find out,  
52 we -- they asked me, he said, well, you can buy a  
53 bigger raft, so you can hold 26 or something. I  
54 said, hell, no, 20 is fine.  
55 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, the Taki Too

1 just had the one life boat.  
2 MR. BALES: No, it has two. Two of them.  
3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Really.  
4 MR. BALES: Oh, wait a minute, no, no, you  
5 are right, he only had the one. He used to have  
6 two.  
7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
8 MR. BALES: He used to have two. And that  
9 one that is on there, the big one, come off the D&D,  
10 because it was, it was a device for 22 people.  
11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
12 MR. BALES: Yeah, that is right. That is  
13 how it was, yeah. He used to have two. And they  
14 used to sit right behind, right behind the bridge up  
15 there, both of them when they would --  
16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
17 MR. BALES: And when they had all of,  
18 changed everything around, they had to put it on top  
19 and they took the one, we took the one off the D&D,  
20 because I couldn't use it anymore.  
21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.  
22 MR. BALES: And might as well use it over  
23 there, so that brought him up, so he could haul 22  
24 people still.  
25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
26 MR. BALES: That is how --  
27 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- working all year.  
28 You are working all year.  
29 MR. BALES: Yes.  
30 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How many times would  
31 you say in the year, say days, would you have to  
32 turn around and not be able to cross the bar?  
33 MR. BALES: You know, that is a hard  
34 decision. Let's see last year? Last year was a  
35 pretty good year. The year before that we turned  
36 around quite a bit. Last year wasn't too bad,  
37 probably six or eight times, I suppose. This year I  
38 haven't had, I don't think I have turned around  
39 once, but it has not been as busy, you know, and  
40 when you are not as busy, obviously, you are not,  
41 you are not going out there every day. Now, I don't  
42 think that any of the other boats have turned  
43 around. A lot of times we will go out, before we  
44 even go out, we will go out to the, where the tower  
45 is at, and take a look and we can see the ocean and  
46 stuff from there, and if the wind is blowing 90  
47 miles an hour, so to speak, and the winds is blowing  
48 -- We just go back up and say, send them on home,  
49 and we are just going to bag it.  
50 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.  
51 MR. BALES: If I make a move to the bar, I  
52 usually write it in the logbook and then write  
53 canceled by it. That means I went out there, and  
54 turned around and come back.  
55 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

1 MR. BALES: Well, for one thing, that gives  
2 me, just the time on the water, any time I untie  
3 like that, I get an extra time on the water. It  
4 helps my license.  
5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
6 MR. WOODY: -- the six or eight turn  
7 arounds, that was last year or the year before?  
8 MR. BALES: That was last year.  
9 MR. WOODY: Last year.  
10 MR. BALES: This year, I don't think --  
11 MR. WOODY: One year did you say was quite  
12 good, all year long was good.  
13 MR. BALES: That was, that was last year.  
14 The year before that we had several, a lot of turn  
15 arounds. But, that year we had a wind and stuff,  
16 too. I can remember during the Halibut and days in  
17 May, when it was, ah, sloppy, sloppy, sloppy. We  
18 turned around a lot of times in there. The last  
19 couple of years we haven't had to turn around as  
20 many.  
21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is talk on the radio  
22 when they are going out there?  
23 MR. BALES: Sometimes, like, like yesterday,  
24 I called Tron and asked him how the ocean was.  
25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What did he say?  
26 MR. BALES: He said the ocean was fine,  
27 which it was. It was a beautiful ocean. He said  
28 the bar was a little bit sloppy. Well, I could see  
29 that. I was sitting on it, but, I won't listen to  
30 anybody else. When I am going to make a bar  
31 crossing, I am the one making the decision whether I  
32 want to go. I am not going to listen to you or you  
33 or you and say, okay, now you can go. No, that  
34 ain't the way it is going to work. That is the same  
35 with -- just got to make that decision, that is the  
36 captain's decision to make that decision to go,  
37 because I am the one that has got to plan it out and  
38 I have got to know when, what I am going to do and I  
39 want to make sure that, you know, there are a lot of  
40 people on there.  
41 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you have any  
42 conversations with Doug at all?  
43 MR. BALES: No, I didn't. He is up on the  
44 bridge there and when he is up there and there is a  
45 breeze blowing and stuff, his mike, a lot of times  
46 you can't, it has got a lot of wind noise in it.  
47 And so, I don't talk to him, unless we are out  
48 fishing and stuff, then we can talk there. He  
49 never, I have never seen him follow me out or  
50 anything, so I don't know -- when he went down, I  
51 asked the passengers, do you see him back there and  
52 they said, no, we didn't see him. So,  
53 I -- Looking out, have you ever got on the boat and  
54 was running it where the cockpit is at, and you  
55 looked out the back, got the overhang with my life

1 jackets are at. Have you seen the D&D?  
2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.  
3 MR. BALES: You have seen it down there.  
4 Okay. Then you see the overhang.  
5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.  
6 MR. BALES: And then you have got your --  
7 and rail and stuff back there. Well, if you are up  
8 in the top, looking back, you have only got about  
9 that much to see. So, when I am looking out of  
10 there, I can't see it.  
11 (Pause.)  
12 MR. BALES: So, you can't see much out  
13 there. So, if you have got any swell at all, I  
14 couldn't see. I would had have to got off the  
15 wheel, walked out and looked down the side. I mean,  
16 I have done it before when we have been out there,  
17 just to see where the other boats are at and stuff.  
18 But, just not a practice. I wouldn't do it until  
19 I was way outside, away from the bar, anyway. Too  
20 many things happen.  
21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you remember  
22 exactly what it was after the Norwester went across  
23 the bar that Tron said on the radio?  
24 MR. BALES: No, I don't. I don't know what  
25 he said.  
26 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Would you  
27 characterize it as, as he stated --  
28 MR. BALES: Well, yeah, it was, like I say,  
29 I don't, I don't listen to that anyway and I just  
30 remember him saying it is a little bit lucky. But,  
31 I do remember him and Steve were having a  
32 conversation when I was sitting there waiting, that  
33 there was some debris in the water.  
34 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Steve Dana.  
35 MR. BALES: Steve Dana.  
36 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oakland Pilot.  
37 MR. BALES: Oakland Pilot.  
38 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
39 MR. BALES: And I never seen the debris  
40 until I got outside and I did see a log out there.  
41 But, I never seen it when I was crossing the bar.  
42 Never seen it.  
43 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So, that this  
44 log, and the debris that you saw --  
45 MR. BALES: Was outside.  
46 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- was outside of  
47 where it was breaking.  
48 MR. BALES: Right.  
49 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
50 MR. BALES: Yeah, I was outside and I seen  
51 it out there.  
52 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
53 MR. BALES: It wasn't, it wasn't on the bar.  
54 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Now, when you got out  
55 to the tips of the jetties and you decided to go for

1 it, I missed whether you had decided, did you go  
2 north or did you go south?  
3 MR. BALES: I went north.  
4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You went north.  
5 Okay.  
6 MR. BALES: We were all going to run north  
7 that morning.  
8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. And this debris  
9 that you said you saw the log and stuff, it was  
10 outside of that area.  
11 MR. BALES: Right, it was outside of the  
12 swells, the break.  
13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
14 MR. BALES: But, there was logs out there.  
15 I never seen, see, you have got to, been down here  
16 and listen to the radio a lot, there is, that is one  
17 of the reasons we don't pay attention to a lot of  
18 things that is said. A lot of people talk and they  
19 don't, you can't believe a lot of things they say,  
20 so to speak. So, you just, there are a few of them,  
21 if he says something, you can take it to the bank,  
22 and there are a few others that you had better weigh  
23 it out and take about 50 percent of it away.  
24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And what category  
25 would Tron have fallen into?  
26 MR. BALES: Tron is a good captain.  
27 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
28 MR. BALES: He would be one of them that  
29 would be, if he said something, it is pretty true.  
30 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So, you don't  
31 recall him saying anything that --  
32 MR. BALES: No, I don't recall him saying  
33 anything that adverse or anything other than it was  
34 a little bit sloppy. But, I could see that. I  
35 could see what I was looking at, you know.  
36 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How does Doug fit  
37 into your --  
38 MR. BALES: Doug was very good.  
39 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Very good.  
40 MR. BALES: He was a good friend, too. He  
41 was a good guy. Very conscientious. Always running  
42 the boat that I can remember, it was, he is always  
43 on the bridge running the boat. So, when you are  
44 up there, I love, the only thing I didn't like about  
45 that boat, if you are down in the cabin, you can't  
46 see anything. But, if you are on the bridge, you  
47 can see everything and that makes it neat. I mean,  
48 you can see everything out there.  
49 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What kind of roof did  
50 it have on it? Was it a -- or was a canopy or --  
51 MR. BALES: You mean, where the, it didn't  
52 have a roof on --  
53 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There was no roof.  
54 MR. BALES: No, no. It is all open.  
55 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All open.

1 (Change of tape.)  
2 MR. BALES: -- so it moves back and forth  
3 and that is what we do.  
4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So, primarily  
5 you are just kind of stationed, keeping in this  
6 area.  
7 MR. BALES: Oh, yeah. One time I was almost  
8 back up to the tower, the Coast Guard was sitting  
9 right back in here.  
10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So the Coast  
11 Guard was back in here.  
12 MR. BALES: Yeah, it seemed, well, not that  
13 close to the south jetty, but he was out, he was  
14 behind us.  
15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
16 MR. BALES: And I don't remember the order,  
17 which way they were sitting there.  
18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Now, we have  
19 had described that some of the boats would do like  
20 race tracks, that some of the guys were just kind of  
21 like station keeping, is that true or --  
22 MR. BALES: Well, Doug, Doug always would,  
23 would, he would follow along and go up there and  
24 then he would turn and look at it and come back up.  
25 Just kind of make a circle out of it.  
26 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
27 MR. BALES: I didn't prefer to do it that  
28 way. I preferred to --  
29 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
30 MR. BALES: -- to sit there where I could  
31 see it. And I am not going to tell him he has to do  
32 something different, because he is running the boat  
33 a lot longer than I have.  
34 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, he was doing this  
35 race track, inland of where you were, right? Or I  
36 mean, was he actually coming up and around?  
37 MR. BALES: He would come up right by us,  
38 yeah.  
39 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So he would  
40 pass in front of you sometimes.  
41 MR. BALES: Oh, yeah.  
42 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
43 MR. BALES: That is the way he run the boat,  
44 and that is fine.  
45 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
46 MR. BALES: If you can --  
47 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, he is like all  
48 over this place.  
49 MR. BALES: Yes.  
50 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And everybody else  
51 just elected to pretty much just kind of --  
52 MR. BALES: Well, these boats --  
53 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- to station --  
54 MR. BALES: -- with twin engines, they can  
55 sit wherever they want to.



1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right. So, they just  
2 kind of get up there and then at some point they see  
3 a break and whoever is there, decides --  
4 MR. BALES: No, usually somebody will make a  
5 move and the other one won't go.  
6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, okay. So,  
7 somebody edged a little bit ahead and --  
8 MR. BALES: Yeah.  
9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- and just, in  
10 looking at the things, and at that point they  
11 decided to go. Everybody else just hangs on.  
12 MR. BALES: Oh, yeah.  
13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And this guy just  
14 floors it and goes for it and everybody else stays -  
15 -  
16 MR. BALES: You don't floor it.  
17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.  
18 MR. BALES: You just work your way through  
19 there.  
20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.  
21 MR. BALES: You know, it is --  
22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
23 MR. BALES: You don't want to, you floor it,  
24 you would come off the back side one of them and  
25 knock the bottom right out of it.  
26 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Okay. So, you  
27 exit to the north, and then --  
28 MR. BALES: Yes.  
29 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And then the next  
30 guy, whoever, is kind of up there --  
31 MR. BALES: Whoever wants to go, whoever  
32 wants to go and Bill, the pilot was sitting right  
33 there behind him.  
34 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
35 MR. BALES: And then he went right after  
36 that.  
37 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
38 MR. BALES: And I moved up and just kind of  
39 moved up a little closer and just kept easing my way  
40 forward. I didn't want to get too close to them,  
41 because they are sitting there.  
42 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right, right.  
43 MR. BALES: I stayed back and when they  
44 went, I kind of eased my way forward and got up  
45 there to, where I could see what was going on.  
46 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. When the Taki  
47 Too was doing her little, her lazy orbits up here,  
48 when she was getting as close to the jetty tips as  
49 she was before she is turning around, was she  
50 getting enough of a view to really see what was  
51 going on out here as, you know, as well a view as  
52 these two guys would be getting?  
53 MR. BALES: Oh, no, he wouldn't have. You  
54 couldn't, he would have to come out further.  
55 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

1 MR. BALES: You couldn't see that even for  
2 me. I couldn't see it south of the, or north of  
3 there until I was up at the tips.  
4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, really at this  
5 point --  
6 MR. BALES: You are watching --  
7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You are thinking --  
8 MR. BALES: What you are probably doing, is  
9 counting the swells, looking at the, looking at it,  
10 watching the swells, where they are breaking, how  
11 they are breaking, you know, taking all of this into  
12 consideration and then when you get up to where you  
13 want to make your move, you already have something  
14 in the back of your mind that says, well, now is the  
15 time to go. And what he is going to do.  
16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
17 MR. BALES: And that is, or that is the way  
18 I do it, anyway. So, I can sit right back here, I  
19 can see everything that is going on from this point  
20 out.  
21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.  
22 MR. BALES: I can't see right here, but I  
23 can see out here. And I can count them, and I can  
24 see what is breaking, so I know what is going on.  
25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You are timing to  
26 place yourself up there before you could go.  
27 MR. BALES: That is exactly right. When it  
28 comes time, I know exactly within seconds, you have  
29 got to know how fast your boat is, you have got to  
30 know everything about it.  
31 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.  
32 MR. BALES: And I know the boat is slow, so,  
33 I know when I get up there, I had better have time  
34 to get across it. If I don't, then I have got to  
35 back up and start over again.  
36 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But, you also know  
37 that you are not going until these two guys are out  
38 of here.  
39 MR. BALES: Oh, I wouldn't come in front of  
40 them, no.  
41 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. Okay.  
42 MR. BALES: No, I wouldn't do that.  
43 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right.  
44 MR. BALES: I didn't like the looks of it  
45 anyway, when we were sitting there. It took me, it  
46 took about another, after they left, I probably 15  
47 or 20 minutes after they got across that I, that I  
48 moved up and --  
49 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you know what time  
50 it was that you did that maneuver?  
51 MR. BALES: I think it was about 7:30. I am  
52 not --  
53 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: About 7:30.  
54 MR. BALES: -- positive about that, because  
55 we left at six and I milled around out there for a

1 long time, so, I would have to say, now the tower  
2 was watching. He should have records of all of that  
3 up there.  
4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, we should be  
5 able to get that.  
6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.  
7 MR. BALES: You should be able to know  
8 exactly.  
9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think you are  
10 probably about 25 minutes off, because --  
11 MR. BALES: Oh, was it.  
12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- the capsize was  
13 at 7:10.  
14 MR. BALES: Oh, I am off then, okay, all  
15 right.  
16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. But, you are  
17 right, we should be able to get that.  
18 MR. BALES: You should be able to get that  
19 number.  
20 MR. WOODY: Can you think of anything else,  
21 because we have got to go?  
22 MR. BALES: Well, if you have any more  
23 questions, feel free to come back and see me.  
24 MR. WOODY: We are trying to reach Tron  
25 also. Is it T-R-O-N?  
26 MR. BALES: Tron, Tron, T-R-O-N.  
27 MR. WOODY: Okay. T-R-O-N.  
28 MR. BALES: T-R-O-N.  
29 MR. WOODY: Okay. And his last name?  
30 MR. BALES: Buell.  
31 MR. WOODY: Buell.  
32 MR. BALES: It is Mick's, Mick's son.  
33 MR. WOODY: Okay.  
34 (End of interview.)